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March 16, 2012

Re: **SUPPORT of H.B. 5409**

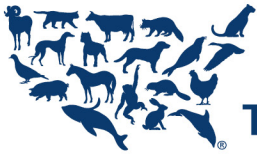
Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee:

On behalf of the greater than 165,000 Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, please accept this testimony in **support of H.B. 5409, An Act Concerning Pet Shops and Consumer Reimbursement for Certain Veterinary Expenses and Prohibiting Pet Shops from Selling Dogs and Cates Obtained from Substandard Domestic Animal Mills.**

Current law (the “puppy lemon law”) provides that consumers who have purchased a sick or genetically defective dog or cat from a pet shop may, under certain circumstances, seek a replacement animal or full refund from the pet shop. The state attorney general has also just issued an opinion that current law requires reimbursement of veterinary expenses whether or not an animal is returned (for replacement or refund). However, pet shops have not been honoring this provision requiring reimbursement of veterinary fees. Many consumers become emotionally attached to their new puppy or kitten and do not wish to simply trade their sick animal in for a healthy one – or to try to explain to their children why they are doing so. This bill would clarify that such a consumer may maintain possession of the animal he/she purchased, also seek a financial remedy of not more than \$500 from the pet shop to apply to any attendant veterinary bills.

The bill also allows the commissioner to prescribe the manner in which pet shops must post consumer rights and obligations under the “puppy lemon law,” although we would recommend that the statute actually specify the manner in which such information must be posted (e.g., sign size, type size and color) - much as Sections 22-344d(a) and (b) and 22-354(b) prescribe the manner in which pet shops must post, among other things, broker and breeder information.

Importantly, the bill removes jail time from the penalties available to the commissioner for pet shops that violate certain licensure requirements, and it directs the commissioner to impose a fine on pet shops that fail to meet basic humane standards. It is critical that the



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Department of Agriculture have such a set of streamlined, usable tools to ensure pet shop licensees' compliance with agency requirements.

Finally, the bill seeks to prevent pet shops from acquiring dogs or cats from substandard breeding facilities. While the proposed language in Section 4 of the bill is, in our view, insufficient to meet that goal, we strongly support the concept and would be pleased to work with the committee toward that end.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony and for your consideration of this bill.

Yours truly,

Annie Hornish  
Connecticut State Director  
The Humane Society of the United States